

Entertainment

MercuryNews.com

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

insideBayArea.com

Weekly Ad

JOBS

CARS

REAL ESTATE

CLASSIFIED

SHOPPING

SEARCH

Site Web Search by YAHOO!



San Jose, CA Now:57°F High:63°F Low:38°F

city or zip

[today's DEALS](#)
[Orchard](#)
[Walmart](#)
[sears](#)
[Send](#)
[Sign Up to see what](#)

+1 0

in Share

[Tweet](#) 4

Advertisement

AdChoices

Jazzman Kenny Werner, master musician

By Andrew Gilbert
Correspondent

Posted: 12/01/2011 12:00:00 AM PST

It's a strange state of affairs when one of jazz's most revered pianists is more influential as an author than a player, but then no one's written a book quite like Kenny Werner's "Effortless Mastery: Freeing the Master Musician Within."

Published in 1996 by Jamey Aebersold Jazz, "Effortless Mastery" is a slim volume that's like a user's manual for the imagination. Over the years, countless players have employed Werner's techniques and practices for "getting past the conscious mind into a place where sound is just sensation," says Werner, 60, who, with his all-star quintet, plays a series of gigs around the Bay Area, including Sunday afternoon for the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society, Monday at Kuumbwa and Tuesday at Yoshi's.

'Not scholarly'

Rather than surveying studies and texts on unlocking creativity, Werner drew on his own experience as an improviser and composer, which is a big part of why "Effortless Mastery" is so accessible.

"My book is very homespun, in that it's not scholarly," Werner says. "It's not built on my study of Zen Buddhism or anything, just my own life experiences getting to that place where your conscious mind is in observation mode actually receiving the music, rather than designing the music."

The book's influence has been pervasive.

Scotts Valley-based Brazilian vocalist Claudia Villela recorded a startlingly beautiful duo session with Werner, 2004's "Dream

Advertisement

PACIFIC SALES

KITCHEN, BATH & ELECTRONICS

- FREE INSTALLATION**
- FREE DELIVERY & RECYCLING**
- 60 DAY PRICE GUARANTEE**

FOR DETAILS CLICK HERE

Oscar Castro-Neves).

"Look at the pianists I've played with: George Shearing, Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans, Shirley Horn and Fred Hersch," Thielemans said in a conversation shortly after Werner served as music director for a Carnegie Hall celebration of his 85th birthday. "Kenny Werner is part of that club. He'll make a harmonic turn and push me over the cliff sometimes, oops! Ah, I found the water anyway."

For much of his career as a bandleader, Werner was known for a series of volatile trios. But he's increasingly recognized as a composer of mysteriously beautiful themes.

Heartfelt tribute

Last year he released his most ambitious and emotionally charged album "No Beginning No End" (HalfNote), an

Click photo to enlarge



The Kenny Werner Quintet will perform at the Douglas Beach House in Half Moon Bay at 4:30 p.m....

Tales" (Adventure Music), after delving into "Effortless Mastery." Even his own bandmates peruse the text. Trumpeter Randy Brecker, a master

who's played a key role on classic rock, pop, fusion and jazz sessions since the late 1960s, keeps a copy of "Effortless Mastery" handy.

"I've read it several times, and sometimes when I'm stuck on something I'll open up a page at random," says Brecker, 66. "It's inspired many thousands of musicians, almost like a Bible."

Werner didn't set out to become a guru. He established himself as an uncommonly responsive accompanist in the 1970s and '80s through his performances and recordings with an array of jazz giants, from Joe Henderson, Jack DeJohnette and Dave Holland to Archie Shepp, Lee Konitz and John Abercrombie. He has an ongoing musical partnership with Broadway star Betty Buckley, but in recent years he's gained his widest exposure through his work with harmonica legend Toots Thielemans (who plays Herbst Theatre on March 10 as part of SFJazz's spring season, with Werner and Brazilian guitarist

RV CONSIGNMENTS

WANTED

SkyRiverRVs.com

Our Dogs Want Your Old Car.

Donate

Second Chance Animal Rescue

Most Viewed

(From the last 12 hours)

RSS

1. [San Jose police: Man who caused post office shutdown was jogger in...](#)
2. [Herhold: The ingredients of a tragedy involving San Jose cop and his...](#)
3. [20,000 without power in Bay Area as gusty winds blow over region](#)
4. [Occupy LA camp cleanup takes hazmat suits, masks](#)
5. [San Jose soldier's body returns home](#)
6. [St. Louis Rams are sight for Frank Gore's sore eyes](#)

Recommendations

Sign Up

Create an account or [log in](#) to see what your friends are recommending.



[San Jose police: Man who caused post office shutdown was jogger in unusual gear - San Jose Mercury N](#)

616 people recommend this.



[Occupy Santa Cruz takes over vacant building on Water Street; police plan to remove them - San Jose.](#)

66 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

Top Classifieds

[RENTALS](#)
[JOBS](#)
[REAL ESTATE](#)
[AUTOS](#)

- ◆ SAN LORENZO
- ◆ Woodside 1BD COTTAGE
- ◆ HAYWARD
- ◆ HAYWARD
- ◆ San Mateo 1/1 \$1350
- ◆ Mother Olson's Inn
- ◆ Oakland Studio-\$695
- ◆ CITY TOWERS APARTMENTS Waiting List Closing.

extraordinary suite for woodwinds, voices, strings, with saxophonist Joe Lovano and vocalist Judi Silvano. Initially commissioned for an MIT performance, the suite turned into loving and heartbreaking tribute to Werner's daughter Kathryn, who was killed in a car crash in 2006. The album earned Werner a Grammy nomination and a 2010 Guggenheim Fellowship Award.

His latest CD, "Balloons" (HalfNote), features essentially the same stellar quintet that he brings to the Bay Area, with the formidable front line of Brecker and Puerto Rican tenor saxophone star David Sanchez. While John Patitucci plays on the album, the group's regular bassist is Scott Colley, who has forged a singularly intuitive rhythm section tandem with Mexican-born drummer Antonio Sanchez (they also play together widely with Pat Metheny and Gary Burton).

Where some composers work in the Ellingtonian tradition, designing parts with specific players in mind, Werner says he doesn't have a gift for writing for specific personalities.

"You write something, set up some situations and leave it open," he said. "Because of the guys you pick you know it's going to be beautiful."

At first glance, "Balloons" looks like a blowing session, with four tunes each running more than 11 minutes. Rather than serving as launchpads for extended improvisational flights, Werner's compositions provide the players with lustrous, detail-rich soundscapes that can take on cinematic dimensions.

"The older I get the more I'm interested in music that sounds like composition," Werner says. "For me it's a journey. You hear these sections change into something else, and they take on life as extended compositions.

"I've never been a fan of records with a bunch of solos. It might be impressive, but it's not interesting to me as a piece of music."

Kenny Werner Quintet

When: 4:30 p.m. Sunday

Where: Douglas Beach House, 311 Mirada Road, Half Moon Bay

Tickets: \$35, 650-726-4143

Also: 7 p.m. Monday, Kuumbwa Jazz Center, 320-2 Cedar St., Santa Cruz, \$25-\$28, 831-427-2227,

www.kuumbwajazz.org; and 8 p.m. Tuesday, Yoshi's San Francisco, 1330 Fillmore St.; \$18; 415-655-5600, www.yoshis.com

Kenny Werner Quintet

When: 8 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Yoshi's-San Francisco, 1330 Fillmore St.

Tickets: \$18; 415-655-5600, www.yoshis.com

 Reprint  BOOKMARK  Print  Email  Font Resize  Return to Top

You Might Be Interested In:

People: Justin Bieber's accuser hits new setback
([MercuryNews.com - Entertainment](#))

Notorious killer of boy in public restroom hangs himself at San Quentin ([MercuryNews.com](#))

From the archives: Chester McGlockton's post-NFL career filled with pain ([MercuryNews.com](#))

People update: Wyclef Jean's Haiti charity missing money ([MercuryNews.com - Entertainment](#))

Clorox Company settles consumer lawsuit for \$200,000
([MercuryNews.com - Business](#))

From Around the Web:

Daughter Beaten by Texas Judge Finally Gets Justice (*The Stir By CafeMom*)

Gallery: 19 Insane Posters for Movies That May Never Exist (*Wired*)



10 Movies That Predicted the Future (*Mainstreet*)


So, Mila Kunis, if it wasn't your phone that was hacked..
(*Naked Security - Sophos*)

Sharon Osbourne Suffered Breast Implant Leak (*RealSelf*)

[[what's this](#)]

• [FAQ: Article commenting how-tos and tips](#)

 Recommend  Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.



 Facebook social plugin

- ♦ [Queen Elizabeth II meets Yoko Ono in Liverpool](#)
- ♦ [New National Christmas Tree in DC to be lit](#)
- ♦ [Superdome architect Arthur Davis dies, age 91](#)
- ♦ [Russian billionaire gives DC's Kennedy Center \\$5M](#)
- ♦ [Israel to show secret items from Eichmann capture](#)
- ♦ [Union calls on BBC to fire Jeremy Clarkson](#)
- ♦ [Regis: Been too busy to miss show with Kelly](#)
- ♦ [Spain's Cervantes prize goes to Chilean poet Parra](#)

[San Francisco 49ers Tix](#)
Just Buy San Francisco 49ers Tickets,

[Top 5 Savings Accounts](#)
List of top rated savings banks with

[\\$9 Car Insurance Trick?](#)
If you drive 25 mi/day or less you better